

# *Civilization of Llhuros: Art Exhibit or Hoax?*

University Art Gallery | State University of New York | January 15-March 11, 1973  
Albany Times Union | Robert Cartmell | January 14, 1973



Norman Daly at work in his studio

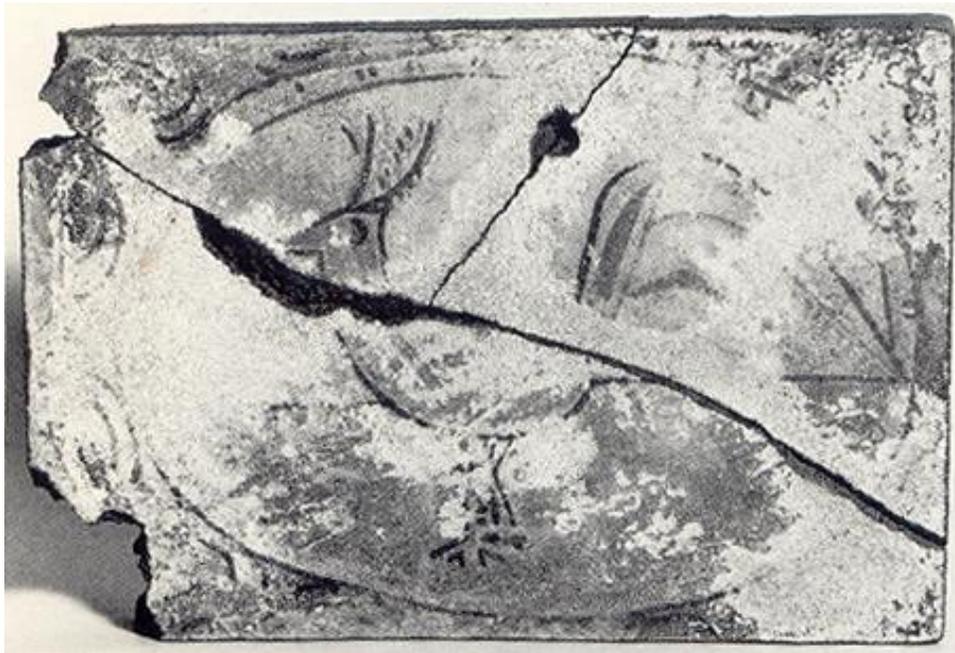
## *Cornell Professor Creates Myth*

A battleground might be in the making at the State University.

The cause is a new civilization on display at the Art Gallery. The show is entitled "The Civilization of Llhuros" and it can be seen January 15 through March 11. The artist is Norman Daly, Professor of Painting and Sculpture at Cornell University.

Daly has actually invented a mythic civilization complete with artifacts, remains of sculpture and painting, ritual, poetry, music, games, ornithology and a group of international scholars, supposed experts in the field of Llhuroscian studies.

Larger dramatic pieces include temple doors, huge fragments of frescoes and a full-scale spectacular 9' x 37' temple wall, decorated in bas-relief. Presented as a sophisticated archaeological display, the exhibition offers a great variety of sights and sounds, ranging from a deceptively conventional catalog which contains an extravagant satire of scholarly lingo, erotic poetry, sex-objects, photographs of artifacts—to taped sounds with music, translations of ritual chants and an interview with noted Llhuroscian anthropologists.



“Fragment of a Mural, Early Archaic” is how Professor Norman Daly describes this piece

The display is perplexing. What is real or artificial? Is this an art exhibit or a hoax?

The viewer rarely knows for sure what anything is made of. What is the word “Honda” doing on a temple gate? Is this newly discovered civilization really that sexually obsessed?

The ambiguities of the show are deliberate of course. Daly says he wants the viewer to be actively aware of the synthetic nature of the Llhuros civilization. Beyond that, Daly hopes “the foibles, follies, superstitions,

fears and anxieties of this mythic culture are recognized as having a disquieting resemblance to our own civilization.

For the most part Daly works with found objects: an orange juice squeezer is given a bronze patina and becomes a vessel for oil, a shovel handle becomes an ancient weapon, while a Honda packing case becomes a bronze gateway.

A portrait of a man found in the mythological ruins actually is a small plastic figure of baseball great Honus Wagner.

All are rearranged, aged, transformed into different materials, invested with new meaning, labeled and turned into mysterious images of a remote but somehow real society.

But is this all the artist is trying to do? Is this only a burlesque as Daly calls it or simply a poof in the words of Newsweek?

Jacques Barzun, in his book “The House of Intellect” cites art, science and philanthropy as the three enemies of communication.

You can imagine Daly putting this exhibition together with two of these enemies in mind. Art and Science with their increasing abilities— at least in this century to communicate nothing, have become so inbred that an outsider doesn’t know what is being discussed—are lampooned unmercifully in this exhibition.

As an example, here is a statement from a Museum of Modern Art catalog. “For me the challenge of painting lies implicit within the act—to penetrate



Dwarf Monster Riding a Wheel, Late Archaic

inherited conceptual deposits and attempt the possible impingement of spirit the personal image remains the conscience.

Gibberish? Exactly! But with an air of authority. It sounds like one of the labels from The Llhuros exhibition.

Daly continuously pokes fun at scholarly research that leads nowhere, He divides and subdivides his culture by his extensive citing of sources which are always written by someone with an elaborate name such as Sir Hilion Rupert Baily, and by his many references to articles in foreign journals , which if they add no significant information prove the author's linguistic ability.

Daly conceived the exhibition about six years ago when he noticed the effort people put into understanding something incomprehensible.

### *Daly Pokes Fun at Art Enemies*

It was during an Elliott Carter concert. The very difficult and rigor of the music seemed to elicit involved responses from the listeners. Daly decided to create a format that would allow him to make comparable demands on an audience of viewers.

The Exhibition would involve the gullibility of the listener but would still be an exhibition of art works.

If the language of science is a target of this show, then art is not far behind. The temptation is to walk around the gallery with the names DuChamp, Schwitters, Red Grooms, and 'Happenings' on your lips. This would be walking into a clever trap with Daly in the center of the web.

Art is "the product of the over-eager, industrious and success-minded artisan who has produced something that had never been done before but was not and is not needed now.... So long as we have this servile attitude the artist will continue to kick us around" says Daly.

Is this an art exhibition then? It is displayed as one. In fact, the exhibition at times becomes too arty. Some of the finishes remind me of many Do-it-Yourself-Antique Kits sold in hardware stores.

Is this another false lead?

Perhaps. If you want the answers, Professor Daly will be giving a lecture, Thursday night, Feb 7, at 7:30 in the University art galleries. The public is invited at no charge.

Photos by Marion Wesp and Marilyn Rivchin (Kawin)